

Switzerland's contribution to the european heritage

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SWITZERLAND'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE.

By M. L. Herking.

Our country possesses an infinitely greater intellectual and artistic life than is suspected by many people, and the same may be said about the position it occupies in regard to science. To-day, we will cast a rapid glance over its industry, so well known, even in the most distant lands, as in ratio to the number of her inhabitants, Switzerland is one of the leading industrial countries in the world, although by her nature, she is an agricultural country.

As you are already aware, our soil is not rich, but nevertheless, we are able to export granite, lime, cement and asphalt. But, it is not in these raw materials that one must seek for the source of the country's important industrial development, but rather in the remarkable technical training of its engineers, technicians and machine-builders, as well as in that of its specialised craftsmen: it is the high quality, the excellent manufacture of our products which makes it possible for us to enjoy world renown in this domain. Among our most important industries, there are four that are in the forefront of all the others. These are, first of all, the *textile industry*, which comprises, on the one hand cotton fabrics such as muslin, voile, batiste (and includes linen), and to which is attached the embroidery industry, which comprises both hand-made and machine-made goods, and has its chief centres in St. Gall and Appenzell. On the other hand, the textile industry also specialises in the production, principally in Zurich and in Basle, of silk tissues and ribbons, which are exported to all the principal countries of Europe. The same remark applies to woollen goods, knit-wear and ready-to-wear garments.

The second industry of major importance is the *metallurgical and machine-making* branch. The big

plants belonging to Roll, in the Canton of Soleure, to Sulzer, in Winterthur, to Escher-Wyss in Zurich, to Brown-Boverie in Aargau, as well as the Oerlikon Works, in the Canton of Zurich, and the Sécheron Works, near Geneva, do not work solely for Switzerland, but export a great deal of their most modern production. The Diesel and Sulzer engines are greatly appreciated in maritime circles, so that, in order to avoid the cost of transport and of customs duties, the industrial firms have built some of their plants abroad. As for our aluminium plants, these are working to full capacity, both at Neuhausen in the Canton of Schaffhausen and at Chippis, in the Valais. It may be said, without fear of exaggeration, that these industries, which we have just mentioned, have contributed towards the improvement and even to the creation of new instruments for metallurgy and for the construction of machinery. Our third, and perhaps best-known industry, is that of *watchmaking*. Geneva was its birthplace, and it still remains, to-day, the great centre for the luxury and super-precision watch. Formerly, the Genevese watches used to be ornamented with miniatures, and some of the best-known artists took pleasure in painting veritable little master-pieces on these watch-cases. In our times, the watch-bracelet no longer makes it possible to indulge in such adornments, but, on the other hand, this watch has now become a real jewel, ornamented with pearls and diamonds. The Jura, also, has specialised in the making of watches, and from Bienne to Porrentruy, from Neuchâtel to Le Locle,



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passing via the Chaux-de-Fonds, watch-making factories have sprung up in large numbers. They go in for making the ordinary watch, the sports-watch, which is automatic and water-proof, and also the anti-magnetic watch, not to speak of the marine chronometres, the precision of which is admired by all the specialists. In this connection I would like to quote an expert on this matter, M. Alfred Chappuis, who has written that "in all the places of this world, Switzerland has brought something of her life, through the intermediary of the myriads of watches which she distributes over the earth". In any case, none of our other exports have contributed, to the same extent, towards the renown of our country.

Finally, our fourth and most recent industry, is that which specialises in chemical and pharmaceutical products. Among all our big cities, Basle is the one which possesses the greatest number of firms which specialise in this domain. The first to enter this field of production were those manufacturing dyes, and they established a branch-factory in the Valais, then came the firms manufacturing pharmaceutical products, such as CIBA, Hoffmann la Roche, Sandoz and Geigy, all of whom possess an immense export market. Other industries, of lesser importance, have also succeeded in conquering the world market, as for instance, our manufacturers of footwear and of porcelain. It is, however, perhaps our industry belonging to the foodstuffs branch, which has gone round the world, the most rapidly, with our Swiss condensed milk, our cheese, our chocolate and our Ovomaltine, and which has founded abroad, similar

establishments to those existing in Switzerland, for the production of three of these specialities.

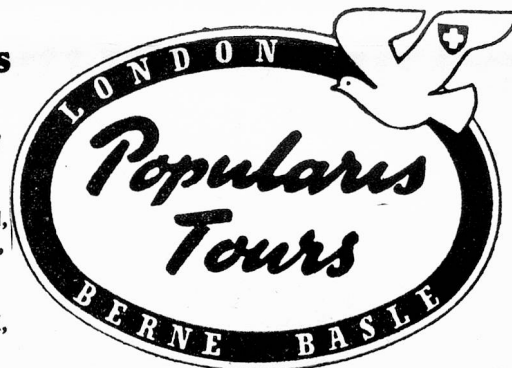
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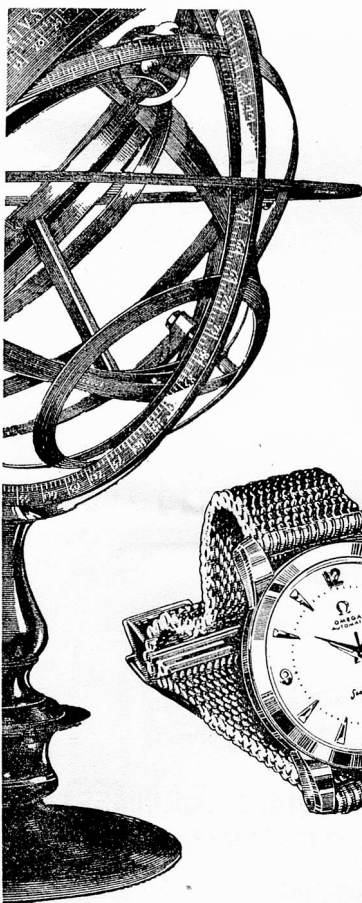
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